April 2004

Welcome to the PEN April newsletter. For the latest information from English PEN, please visit our home page, www.englishpen.org. Past monthly newsletters will be available on the website. If you do not wish to receive the newsletter please email simon@englishpen.org with ‘unsubscribe’ in the subject line. Also, if you know of someone who would prefer a hard copy, please let Simon know.

TECHNICAL

One or two people have been in touch to say that they can’t follow some of our links on the website. You need Adobe Reader to do so, which is a free program. To download it go to this link and follow the steps: http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep2.html

HOW YOU CAN HELP

- If you are travelling and would like to write a report for PEN members on your trip, please let us know. We’d be delighted to post the report on our website, and flag it in the newsletter. See NEW ON THE WEBSITE below.

- English PEN has been asked to collaborate with Channel 4 in three short films each featuring a poem by a contemporary writer. Please do watch these films which are being broadcast at 19.55 on Channel 4 on 24th, 25th and 26th May.

MEMBERS’ NEWS

http://www.englishpen.org/membership/

- We’re delighted to welcome recent new members/friends, Dr Liam Gearon, Alexei Sayle, Mimi Thebo, Lucy Jane Tetlow, Will Self, Susan Gates, D. M. Shaughnessy, Lee Allane, Karen Newby, Stephanie Baudet, Bernardine Evaristo, Robert Irwin, Idriz Saltagic, Deborah Murrell, Lee Weatherly, Lawrence Sail, Iro Aghedo and Brian Wall.

- Dawn Lowe-Watson is in conversation with her BBC Radio Drama Producer Cherry Cookson on platform at the Arts Club, 40 Dover Street on Monday 24 May at 7.00 pm. They have worked together since the nineteen-eighties on over fifteen productions. See http://theartsclub.co.uk for details.

- Many thanks to all those members who sent in their completed questionnaires. Please contact Simon@englishpen.org or call 020 7713 0023 if you’d like a digest of the replies.

- There is a new facility on the website. If you have a comment on, or inspired by, any recent PEN event which you would like to share either with us at the office, or with the
membership, please send it to me (simon@englishpen.org) with ‘Member’s Comment’ in the subject line, and I will include it in our new Members’ Comments section. In which connection, please see http://www.englishpen.org/membership/commentsanddiscussions/ for Natascha Scott-Stokes and Moises Florian on the recent Talking Tuesday on Exile and Writing. Of course, if you have any comment on any of the comments, we will be glad to post them too.

- Timeri Murari, Rosemary Friedman, and Patricia Ferguson would like to direct you to their forthcoming publications, on http://www.englishpen.org/membership/recentpublications/

- And your Membership Secretary would like you to read: A Story as Sharp as a Knife: The Classical Haida Storytellers and Their World, by Robert Bringhurst. Essential stuff, achingly moving. You have to get it from http://www.amazon.ca I’m afraid, but you have to get it!

OFFICERS AND COMMITTEES

- Rachel Billington, who has headed the Readers & Writers Committee since the programme’s founding in 1999, this month reluctantly announced her intention to retire as Chair at the end of the year. She feels she should give someone else the opportunity to take on this role. Nominations should be sent to jo@englishpen.org by mid-September 2004.

- Moris Farhi and Bonnie Greer have resigned from the Executive Committee.

- At the members’ meeting on 27th April a majority of members present voted in favour of an Extraordinary General Meeting to be held in June. Members will be informed of the date, time and venue as soon as possible, as well as necessary procedural details. They will also be supplied with an agenda and any supporting documents

EVENTS
http://www.englishpen.org/events

- May’s Talking Tuesday with Caryl Phillips was on April 27th, as you all know. There will be a report in the next newsletter. June’s Talking Tuesday is on Tues June 8th, and will feature Moris Farhi and Richard McKane. They will be talking, among other things, about Moris’s new book, Young Turk, published by Saqi Books at £9.99. Talking Tuesdays are turning out to be really very good. Wine flows, there are excellent talkers and wide-ranging discussions. For a brief report on the recent Lawrence Sail Talking Tuesday see http://www.englishpen.org/events/recentevents/lawrencesailandexiletalkingtue/

- The final line-up for International Writers’ Day, Saturday 29th May, has been announced. It includes: Louis de Bernières, Maggie Gee, Orhan Pamuk, Maureen Freely, and Will Self. The ST Dupont Gold Pen award for a lifetime’s service to literature goes to Nina Bawden. This day, of course, is PEN’s flagship event, and always
entirely excellent. Tickets are still available, at the moment – please see http://www.englishpen.org/events/penevents/internationalwritersday2004/ for further details and booking.

- **Harold Pinter in conversation at the Brighton Festival in association with English PEN:** May 11 2004. PEN Member Harold Pinter, an outspoken and passionate advocate of human rights, will be discussing the themes of personal and political freedom today and the influence of governments and world events in determining the shape and quality of our lives. Please note, all booking is through the Brighton festival, not the English PEN office. Please call 01273 709709 for tickets. See http://www.englishpen.org/events/penevents/haroldpinterinconversation/ for details.

- **Italia Fantastica:** May 27 2004: To mark Mario Fortunato’s very successful four year term as Director of the Italian Cultural Institute, the ICI is organizing a day dedicated to literature, in collaboration with English PEN. Please note that this will start later than advertised: 4pm-6pm: performers include Mavis Cheek, Clare Colvin, Ruth Fainlight, Anne Sebba. 6pm-8pm: performances include a rare appearance by Italian writer Alessandro Baricco, author of Silk, plus a selection of writers who participated in a series of conversations held at the Institute. See http://www.englishpen.org/events/penevents/italiafantastica/ for details.

- For the International PEN Foundation’s fundraising event on Saturday 5th June see below under INTERNATIONAL.

- **International Writers’ Day in Swansea:** PEN member Tom Cheesman and the Swansea Bay Asylum Seekers Support Group are running a satellite event to mark English PEN’s International Writers’ Day on Saturday 29th May. There will be readings and discussions with local and refugee writers, journalists, poets, novelists, dramatists, many seeking asylum, others now with leave to remain. For more information go to http://www.hafan.org/2004May29.htm

**WRITERS IN PRISON**
http://www.englishpen.org/writersinprison/

- Ania Corless and Lucy Popescu went to Uzbekistan on 21 March on a FCO funded human rights mission. They met the British Ambassador and English PEN’s honorary member Ruslan Sharipov, currently detained in a low security prison, as well as the families of other writers in prison. They were able to give money from the Prisoners of Conscience Fund to the prisoners and their families. They also met with various Human Rights organisations. A report will be available on the website shortly.

- The WiPC has recently sent appeals to Uzbekistan, Syria, Morocco, the Ivory Coast, Saudi Arabia, Armenia and China.

- April’s prisoner of the month was Uighur writer and historian Tohti Tunyaz. The prisoner of the month for May will be Alireza Jabari, Iran. Please see http://www.englishpen.org/writersinprison/ for details.
We supported International PEN’s letter to the Burmese authorities calling for the release of Aung San Suu Kyi and eight other imprisoned writers. The letter was signed by Vaclav Havel, Jiri Grusa and fourteen Nobel Laureates for Literature. Please go to http://www.englishpen.org/writersinprison/bulletins/vaclavhavelandnobellaureatesca/ for further info.

English PEN was asked to nominate a candidate to stand as chair of the International PEN WiPC at the election in Barcelona in May. The English PEN WiPC unanimously proposed its chair, Joan Smith, who also had the support of the Scottish, Catalan and Mexican centres. The Executive Committee, who are required to endorse the proposal, voted not to do so. Moris Farhi has resigned from the executive in protest.

READERS AND WRITERS
www.englishpen.org/readersandwriters

Thanks go to poet Lindsay MacRae for her work for R&W at the Community English School, Oxford. She worked with immigrant, refugee and asylum seeking women from Afghanistan, Iran, Burundi, Kosovo and Bosnia. One of the women commented: ‘I can write very well in Urdu, even poems, but in English, no! But I tried that day, and I wrote a poem and I really like my poem.’ For full details and to read poetry inspired by the visit go to: http://www.englishpen.org/readersandwriters/newsandevents2004/

At its recent meeting the Readers & Writers committee elected and warmly welcomed new members Tony Bradman, Mavis Cheek and Jamila Gavin. All three writers have already been very supportive of the programme.

Jamila Gavin would like to draw members’ attention to www.therighttowrite.co.uk; a web site that she has helped set up. Young people, she finds, are angered when they discover that some people are not allowed to write what they feel and believe and sometimes they want to tell their own stories as a result. The Right to Write is a place where those stories can be shared. As Jamila, and people like her, visit more young people and encourage them to write their own stories so the site will grow.

WRITERS IN TRANSLATION
http://www.englishpen.org/writersintranslation/

At the most recent meeting of the Writers in Translation Steering Committee on 20th April, the committee discussed the structure of the programme, and established that the two key areas of activity will be as follows: (1) To promote works in English translation that are already under contract with UK publishers. (2) To publish an online ‘magazine’ with sample pieces (in English translation) of new work written in minority languages. This will be aimed at UK publishers as well as the literary community in general, and will attempt to encourage greater awareness of under-exposed literature.
We will very shortly be requesting submissions from UK publishers for works they would like the programme to assist with promoting, and a shortlist of works will be considered at the programme’s next meeting in June.

The ‘e-network’ – our database of people involved in literary translation - has developed into an extensive list, but suggestions are still welcome. Please contact Catherine with suggestions: catherine@englishpen.org

The Independent Foreign Fiction Prize 2004 has been awarded to Javier Cercas and his translator, Anne McClean, for Soldiers of Salamis. The prize was awarded at a ceremony in the Chelsfield Room at the Royal Festival Hall on 20th April. For more information, please go to http://www.arts council.org.uk/pressnews/press_detail.php?browse=recent&id=224

The AHRB Centre for Asian and African Literatures is pleased to announce the release of its new newsletter. You can view and download Newsletter 11, April - June 2004 on their website at http://www.soas.ac.uk/literatures/Newsletter/Newsletterindex.html. This includes details of the new Poetry Translation Centre at SOAS.

INTERNATIONAL

New End Theatre event in aid of the International PEN Foundation: The International PEN Foundation invites you to a private performance and party with the playwright and director of The Private Room, an intense yet savagely funny play set on Wall Street and in the interrogation cells at Guantánamo, at the New End Theatre on Saturday 5th June at 7.30pm. All welcome. See http://www.englishpen.org/events/penevents/privateroom/ for details. NB Booking is through International PEN, not English PEN.

The paperwork for the International PEN Congress in Tromso is now available on the website on http://www.englishpen.org/membership/internationalpencongresstromso/

The International PEN Writers in Prison Committee Congress, which is a biennial event, will be held this year as part of Forum 2004 in Barcelona. See http://www.englishpen.org/events/otherevents/internationalpencongressatfo/ for further details. This year there are closed working sessions for PEN WiPC members but also plenty of open events.

It’s Bled time again. For details of the Writers for Peace conference in Bled from the 26th – 30th May, see http://www.englishpen.org/international/newsfromotherpencentres/writersforpeaceconference/. In which connection, see Breakfast with Triglav, a report on the 2003 Writers for Peace conference by Pauline Neville, linked on the same page. Contact tanya@englishpen.org for further information and an application form for the Bled conference.
The International PEN Women Writers' Committee invites contributions of poetry and short stories in Spanish, French or English for the 3rd volume of the anthology Nuestra Voz. Contributors must be women and PEN members. Only those women who do not have work already published in the first and second volumes are eligible. See http://www.englishpen.org/international/newsfromotherpencentres/nuestravozinternationalpenwomen/ for details.

NEW ON THE WEBSITE

- Sierra Leone. An open letter to PEN Members from Louise Dean on her efforts to set up a literacy project in Sierra Leone. See http://www.englishpen.org/international/newsfromotherpencentres/sierraleoneliteracyproject/.

- There is a new Comments and discussions facility, see MEMBERS’ NEWS above.

- For a full report on the three Creative Writing Masterclasses held last month at the London Book Fair at http://www.englishpen.org/events/recentevents/creativenationalmasterclasses20/.

- News from Bangladesh: Read English PEN Vice-President Victoria Glendinning’s report on the attack in Bangladesh on Dr Humayun Azad, with Kaiser Haq’s very moving poem on the same subject. On the same page there is also a poem by Bangladeshi poet Imrul Kayes - http://www.englishpen.org/international/newsfromotherpencentres/newsfrombangladesh/.